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Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 64/132, provides an assessment of national implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The report includes information about national efforts to establish ageing-specific policies and programmes and to integrate ageing concerns into national development plans and about activities of the United Nations system in support of ageing policies and recommendations for consideration by the Assembly. For a comprehensive overview of the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, see A/65/157.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/132, entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing", requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

2. The report provides an overview of efforts by Governments to address their implementation priorities under the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, with a focus on activities since 2008. Specifically, it examines national progress on implementation through a review of national policies on ageing and national development plans, including with regard to the development of a health-care workforce with an emphasis on geriatric care, data and research on older persons, national frameworks that encourage participation and volunteerism, campaigns to raise awareness of population ageing, the building of partnerships to advance advocacy on issues related to ageing and efforts to promote the human rights of older persons. The report also highlights key issues related to ageing, including abuse, neglect and violence, and programmes and policies that provide support to carers and caregiving. In addition, it provides an update of current activities of the United Nations system in the area of ageing. Conclusions and recommendations are presented for consideration by the General Assembly.

3. The report is based on submissions received from United Nations regional commissions and agencies and non-governmental organizations and other sources available to the Secretariat.

II. National progress on implementation

4. At its forty-seventh session, held in 2009, the Commission for Social Development was presented with a strategic implementation framework,[1] intended to assist Member States in focusing their efforts on implementing the Madrid Plan of Action through the remaining years of its first decade, until 2012. Although each country should determine its own priorities to advance the implementation process, commensurate with its current stage of economic and social development and phase of population ageing, the framework is intended to be universal. It identifies three principal policy approaches for national policy actions: developing national capacity on ageing; awareness-raising; and empowerment and participation.

5. The present report follows the structure set out in the strategic implementation framework as a means of analysing recent progress in the national implementation of the Madrid Plan. Efforts to build national capacity in the area of ageing are examined; initiatives to raise awareness about ageing are considered; and measures to empower older persons and promote their rights are reviewed. Since Member States are not required to report annually on their implementation efforts, the following merely provides a snapshot of national activities on ageing in recent years, drawn from a broad cross-section of countries.

[1] E/CN.5/2009/5.

A. Building national capacity on ageing

6. In order to successfully implement the Madrid Plan, Governments need the capacity to formulate and implement policies, enforce laws and legislation and develop a monitoring process that evaluates progress and challenges. If the success of the process is to be ensured, States must have the human resources, financial capacity, political will and organizational skills to see it through. Accordingly, Member States are encouraged to 'strengthen their efforts to develop national capacity in the area of ageing, including by building institutional infrastructure, investing in human resources, mobilizing financial resources and placing greater emphasis on research, data collection and analysis.

Incorporating ageing into national development frameworks

7. Although there is evidence that countries have established national plans and policies on ageing and integrated ageing into their national development plans, the extent to which that has been done varies considerably. Most developed and middle-income countries have implemented and carried out ageing-related policies that reflect both their demographic realities and their capacity to implement, enforce and monitor policies and programmes for older persons. On the other hand, in many developing countries, older persons remain a relatively small proportion of the population, and resource constraints and competing priorities can pose a serious obstacle to the full implementation of the Madrid Plan. Nevertheless, efforts have been made by both developing and developed countries to incorporate ageing into national development frameworks covering a broad range of topics, from housing to social allowances and workforce protection initiatives.

8. National ageing policies were recently adopted in Mauritius, Morocco, Slovakia Republic and Turkey. In 2008, Mauritius prepared a new national policy on ageing, which includes training and empowerment programmes to encourage older persons to adopt productive ageing philosophies and engage in income-generating activities. The policy will also enhance existing practices in the areas of health care, leisure, protection, intergenerational relationships and the environment.[2] Morocco included in its 2008-2010 strategic plan a national strategy for older persons, which covers income and pensions, health, housing and living conditions and the roles and rights of older persons in society. In 2009, Slovakia adopted a national programme for the protection of the elderly, which provides a framework for policymaking with regard to older persons. The programme covers social security, employment, family policy, education, safety, health care, housing, culture and media, taxes and fees, transportation, postal and telecommunication services, legal protection, the economy, agriculture and the environment.[3] In Turkey, the national Government, universities and scientific organizations prepared a report entitled "The situation of elderly people in Turkey and national plan of action on ageing", which was adopted and led to the recommendation of concrete solutions regarding the social, economic and medical concerns of older persons.

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[2] Helping our elderly to age with dignity and security, September 2008, available at http://www.gov.nu/portal/site/Mainhomepage/menuitema42b24128104d9845dabddd154508a0c/?content_id=49d660da09dac110VgnVCM1000000a04a8c0RCRD.

[3] Economic Commission for Europe, policy brief, "Mainstreaming ageing", November 2009, available at http://www.globalaging.org/agingwatch/events/regionals/ece/Policybrief_Mainstreaming_Eng.pdf.

9. Efforts to integrate older persons into national development plans were made in a number of countries. As part of its national development plan (2007-2013), Ireland committed €1.6 billion for community care services for older persons, including affordable housing, volunteer opportunities and subsidized transportation.[4]. In France, "Ageing well" (2007-2009) is part of the national development plan. Its objective is the adoption of a holistic approach to ageing. For example, the plan promotes healthy living, the prevention of medical conditions and improvements in living conditions and quality of life for older people. The plan also encourages the participation of older persons in social and cultural activities and intergenerational solidarity. In Thailand, the tenth national economic and social development plan, as well as the Government's administrative strategy, addressed the need for a long-term care system and a national savings fund, built the capacity of local authorities to implement a multidimensional approach to ageing programmes and facilitated the development of age-friendly housing and supportive environments.

10. A number of countries, including Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, China, France, Mauritius, Morocco, Nepal, Serbia and Tunisia, have reported initiatives to improve access to affordable housing and promote "ageing in place" in their national policies. For example, France has launched a new campaign, "Living at home", to promote house adaptations and improve safety, quality of life, home technology and urban planning to provide better transportation and public spaces for older persons. In Antigua and Barbuda, programmes such as the home improvement grant have been introduced to help older persons make their homes more age-friendly.

11. Afghanistan, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mauritius, Nepal, the Philippines and Viet Nam have specifically identified older persons as the beneficiaries of social allowance initiatives. For instance, the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 of the Philippines provides 500 to 1,500 Philippine pesos ($11 to $32) a month to older persons living in extreme poverty. In Mauritius, the 2008 national policy on ageing included income-generating activities, and article 37 of the Constitution of Ecuador provided for universal pensions. In Canada, as part of a stimulus package in 2009, older persons were given tax incentives and a social allowance to provide relief during the economic and financial crisis.

12. Some countries have made efforts to promote and protect the active involvement of older persons in the workforce. In Mexico, the national development plan (2007-2012) recognizes older persons as productive members of society by providing tax incentives for employers that hire older workers, implementing policies to protect older workers and granting a social allowance for persons over the age of 70. In Slovenia, the "Strategy of care for the elderly until 2010: solidarity, good intergenerational relations and quality ageing of the population" promotes employment for older workers by providing special income tax relief, regulates part-time and temporary work for retired persons, creates more flexible forms of employment, increases protections for older workers and provides lifelong learning programmes. Similarly, in Austria the Government has created policies to protect

[4] Ireland National Development Plan 2007-2013, "Transforming Ireland: a better quality of life for all", annual report 2007, available at http://www.ndp.ie/documents/publications/annual/NDP_AnnualReport2007.pdf.

older workers, encourages companies to hire them and promotes lifelong learning and job-training programmes to reintegrate them into the workforce.

Investing in human resources

13. An important component of national capacity-building is the strengthening of human resources to effectively deal with ageing-related issues. This includes providing appropriate training to health-care professionals, formal and informal caregivers, community service providers and budget and finance specialists, all of whom must be equipped to focus on both the current and the emerging needs of the older population. Building human-resource capacity also involves nurturing the human potential of older persons themselves. The experience, skills and wisdom of older persons are invaluable tools that can be enhanced through, inter alia, volunteer opportunities.

14. Given the accelerated pace of ageing in all countries, there is a particularly urgent need to reassess the health-care workforce to ensure that workers' skills and training correspond with the health requirements of an older population. To that end, several Member States have implemented a variety of programmes and policies to increase the number of health-care workers specializing in geriatric care. Such initiatives include student loan forgiveness plans, the provision of support for continuing education training in geriatric care for health-care professionals, training opportunities for volunteers to become professional caregivers and pay increases.

15. Australia adopted a new National Dementia Initiative, aimed at strengthening the capacity of health-care and aged-care workers and providing evidence-based prevention and early intervention, assessment, treatment and care for people with dementia. The programme commits $121 million Australian dollars for dementia care at home, research and training for aged-care and community-care staff, caregivers, community workers and police officers. In Ukraine, the Government has adopted a geriatric education and training programme for physicians, nurses, social workers and volunteers. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and Yemen have provided skills-enhancement programmes for health-care workers in the public and private sectors.

16. In Hong Kong, China, and Singapore, informal caregivers are being recruited for training in geriatric care. Informal caregivers, who are mostly women caring for a disabled relative or an older person, receive training to become formal caregivers. The objective of the programme is to provide a bridge for those wanting to move from informal to formal qualifications and care settings and thereby increase the supply of skilled caregivers in the community.

17. Various countries, including Argentina, Costa Rica, Myanmar, Thailand and Uruguay, have created programmes that train young and older volunteers to become formal caregivers. The volunteers receive professional training in geriatric care and the provision of assistance with respect to daily living and other needs, providing a valuable human resource for home-based care. For example, in Thailand the Government has established a project of community volunteer caregivers for the elderly with the objective of training people from the community to be caregivers. Similarly, in Myanmar, "Home care for older persons", a joint initiative of the Republic of Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, provides volunteers with an opportunity to become caregivers in their community.

Older persons as volunteers

18. Another important aspect of human resources development is the cultivation of the talent and expertise of older persons themselves. Creating and promoting volunteer programmes for them can serve to meet unmet needs in the community as well as enhance older persons' feelings of value and worth. In Sri Lanka, older and younger women are working together to create home gardens throughout the country with a view to preventing food shortages. In 2008, Slovenia established a programme that matches older volunteers with home-bound elders to provide assistance and companionship. Similarly, in the United States of America, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 encourages older persons to serve other older people who need assistance with daily tasks and to become foster grandparents to children with special needs.

19. In New Zealand, the Office of Senior Citizens, under the Ministry of Social Development, created a volunteer and advocacy group comprising 29 older persons selected from community organizations throughout the country. The group is responsible for implementing the volunteer community coordinators programme by strengthening networks in the local community and informing local governments about the needs and concerns of older persons. Older persons who have volunteered to serve as coordinators are recognized and honoured by being chosen as "positive ageing ambassadors". In India, the Volunteers Bureau for Older Persons helps older persons to utilize their skills, talents and experience for the benefit of society. Older persons register with the Bureau and offer their assistance to hospitals, schools and institutions for children with physical or mental disabilities.

20. Encouraging older persons and young people to volunteer together can also be a way of building intergenerational solidarity. Older persons can tutor and mentor young people and become foster grandparents to children with special needs. In many cases, older persons also share their pensions with their families so as to ensure that their grandchildren go to school or have access to medical care. Similarly, young people can volunteer to provide friendship to home-bound older persons, assisting with shopping and household chores, showing them how to use computers and other technological equipment and caring for them when they become sick and frail. One example of this intergenerational volunteering model can be found in the German "Create new age" initiative, which gathers young people and older persons together to take part in activities such as reading to schoolchildren, tutoring students, visiting nursing homes, helping people with disabilities and shopping for food.

Emphasizing research and data collection

21. Effective and evidence-based policy can be developed and advocated when valid, reliable and representative research and data are available to policymakers and civil society organizations. Data collection and research on older persons is more prevalent in developed countries, where financial capacity and human resources are available and the ageing population constitutes a considerable percentage of the general population. Even so, data and research have tended to focus on population ageing rather than on the situation of older persons, and thus have failed to measure the social, economic and cultural situations of older persons adequately.

22. To remedy that situation, a number of developed countries have devoted resources to improving data collection and research on the situation of older persons. For example, the Netherlands has made available €80 million for research to improve the diagnosis of somatic and psychiatric problems in older persons by conducting a comprehensive geriatric assessment of the health-care system and improving the coordination and care of older persons. In the United States, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the National Institute on Ageing received approximately $275 million of the funding allocated to the National Institutes on Health to conduct research on such issues as Alzheimer's disease, nutrition, obesity, osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease, as well as health utilization, health disparities and support for family caregivers. Furthermore, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has developed a database of good policy practices based on examples submitted by the members of the ECE Working Group on Ageing. In order to supplement the research findings provided by its members, it has developed indicators, collected data and disseminated information through a website on ageing-related policies and strategies, national implementation activities, publications and networks and non-governmental organizations working in the field of ageing.

23. In general, research and data collection on older persons in developing countries remains limited, although there have been some recent commitments to improving data collection. For example, the Department for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission is developing plans for the establishment of an advisory council to promote policy, practice and research on ageing in the region. In addition, countries with limited financial and professional human resource capacities have partnered with United Nations agencies, international universities and non-governmental organizations to strengthen their data collection and policymaking capacity. For example, India is conducting two studies on ageing with the Harvard School of Public Health and the World Health Organization, respectively. Both studies, the first of their kind in India, will assist policy analysts and programme planners in making policy decisions related to labour supply, demand for and utilization of health care, the socio-economic well-being of older persons and their families and the burden of disease.

B. Raising awareness of issues related to ageing

24. As countries proceed with the implementation process, greater attention should be paid to raising awareness about ageing-related issues in general and the contents of the Madrid Plan in particular. Awareness-raising activities include developing media and political channels to improve access to information for and about older persons. This includes raising awareness among policymakers, stakeholders and the general public about the contributions that older persons make to society. Furthermore, it is essential to build partnerships among and between Governments, civil society, academia and the media in order to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities associated with population ageing.

Channels for raising awareness

25. Generalizations or assumptions about older persons can lead to negative stereotyping that serves only to exacerbate negative images and further marginalize older persons from society. The Madrid Plan encourages Governments to promote

positive images of ageing and emphasizes the vital contributions that older persons make to their societies.

26. In recognition of the important role older persons play in all aspects of society, Member States have taken initiatives to enhance and promote positive and realistic images of older persons. For example, in 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs of Austria organized a workshop at which media experts and scientists were invited to develop strategies and instruments to create sustainable and modern images of ageing and older persons in the media with a view to countering depictions of older persons as either deficient, in bad health or in need of long-term care.

27. Furthermore in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Manchester City Council has developed the Positive Images Task Group aimed at promoting a positive and healthy attitude towards ageing; promoting healthy lifestyle choices that reduce the impact of ageing; challenging negative stereotypes of older people; encouraging the public to re-evaluate attitudes towards older people; and urging local agencies to revisit the way in which they deal with and deliver services to older people. The task group has produced calendars and newsletters and provides a forum in which older persons in the community can express their concerns. In addition, it holds an annual "Full of life" festival to celebrate the achievements of older persons.

28. In Canada, the National Advisory Council on Seniors has produced a series of "report cards on aging" that assess the quality of life, health, income security and social connections of older adults. Its work has been cited by researchers, policymakers and the media and has been important in raising the consciousness of the Canadian public about issues related to ageing.

29. Other initiatives that Governments have taken to improve the image of older persons include the organization of activities through which their value, worth and achievements are recognized. These include designating a day or a month to celebrate older persons. In this regard, many countries have found unique ways to honour older persons as part of their celebrations for the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October. Throughout the month of October, the Government of Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz non-governmental organizations provide free clothing and food to poor older persons, and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Government provides free health care to older persons. In Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has designated October as "Employment Support for the Elderly Month" with a view to raising awareness about older workers through educational activities aimed at fostering employment opportunities for older workers, a public symposium, demonstrations of successful best practices by Japanese companies, exhibits and contests.[5] In addition, the ministry publishes an educational journal on ageing and employment entitled "Elder" and books and pamphlets that address issues relating to employment for older persons and produces television commercials and posters intended to educate the public about the value of older workers.

30. In Australia, the Government celebrates "Seniors Week", which recognizes the valuable contributions that Australian seniors make to their communities. Related

[5] Japan Organization for Employment of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, "Educational activities concerning employment of the elderly", available at http://www.jeed.or.jp/english/educational_activity_eld.html.

events include information sessions on computing, dancing, cooking and exercise classes, environmental, activities and concerts and movies. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Government has designated several days throughout the year to celebrate the achievements of older people, including the "Day of Service to Seniors", "Place for Seniors Day" and "Delivery Service Day", which showcase the good works that people have done for older persons. In China, the Government celebrates "Senior Citizens' Day" by promoting educational, cultural and intergenerational activities to help older persons understand their rights. Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon and Qatar also have designated national days to honour older persons by promoting training workshops and displaying handicrafts made by older persons.

Building partnerships

31. The building of the partnerships at both the national and the multilateral levels between Governments, civil society and academic and research institutions contributes to the sharing of best practices, facilitates financial assistance and increases knowledge about population ageing and the situation of older persons. The advocacy and research that entities in those sectors provide serve to strengthen the rights of older persons, enlighten Government officials so that they can develop policies and programmes that benefit the older population and educate the general public about the importance of ageing-related issues.

32. At the national level, non-governmental organizations, academia and research institutions play an important role in building the capacity of Governments to address the situation of older persons. Non-governmental organizations in developed countries frequently advocate on behalf of older persons by meeting with Government representatives and issuing press releases and reports on matters that affect older persons. In developing countries, where financial and human resource capacities on ageing-related issues are often lacking, non-governmental organizations, foundations and academic institutions based in developed countries can sometimes fill the gap. They can conduct research, collect data, provide training to Government personnel, empower older persons to ensure that their rights are respected and work with Governments to incorporate the Madrid Plan into their development or poverty eradication plans. In some cases such organizations assist Government ministries in creating national ageing plans.

33. At the multilateral level, cooperation between developed and developing countries, as well as South-South cooperation, enhances the ability of low-income countries to implement the Madrid Plan. For instance, in 2009, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Elderly Affairs of Tunisia and the Minister of Family and Solidarity of Benin met to discuss ways in which they could strengthen protection mechanisms for children and older persons. Similarly, France and Senegal have signed a bilateral cooperation agreement that will provide Senegal with technical assistance in implementing programmes in the areas of health, social protection and advocacy for older persons. Japan, the United Kingdom and Norway are providing technical and financial support to Serbia to advance its social care system and assist in the construction of day centres for older persons. In terms of South-South cooperation, representatives of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka gathered in 2008 to discuss training and best practices in geriatric care, to explore research and development and to provide for the psychological, social and economic needs of older persons.

34. A number of Governments have coordinated their efforts with non-governmental organizations working on behalf of older persons. For example, the Government of Cambodia is collaborating with HelpAge International to improve the health and income security of older Cambodians. Programmes include organizing associations and clubs for older persons, including in the context of the development process of the community, and distributing loans for the purchase of farming material and food. In Kyrgyzstan, the Government is partnering with HelpAge International, the Institution-Building Partnership Programme within the framework of the European Commission Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States programme and the Babushka Adoption Foundation to implement a new project to help realize the rights of older persons through round-table discussions, press conferences, newsletters and the engagement of local and community politicians in the programme.

35. As a sign of their support for the work of organizations that represent older persons, Governments in developing countries have been giving them financial assistance. For example, in Morocco, the National Strategy for Older Persons allows the Government to financially support civil society organizations that create intergenerational programmes and provide training for persons caring for older persons. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Social Welfare has given 100 million taka to the Elderly Citizen Welfare Association so that it can continue working on projects that benefit older persons. In Costa Rica, the Government provides financial assistance to non-profit organizations that care for older persons. Similarly, Nicaragua provides support to non-profit organizations that care for older persons in rural areas.

36. Governments often work with organizations that represent older persons to provide services to older persons in need. For example, the Government of China is working with civil society organizations by providing financial support for the construction of activity centres for older persons. In India, the Government and civil society organizations have worked together to provide microcredit loans and health care for older persons. In Cuba, local governments and non-governmental organizations have coordinated programmes and provided support to families and communities caring for older persons.

C. Empowering older persons and promoting their rights

37. In order to create a society for all ages, it is important to promote and protect the rights of older persons as well as facilitate their integration and participation. The increased participation of older persons in economic, political and social life provides for their well-being and benefits their communities. Ensuring access to basic rights and ensuring the participation of older persons in decisions that affect them can also contribute to their empowerment.

Human rights of older persons

38. Around the world, countries have been implementing policies, amending constitutions, adopting legislation, developing programmes and establishing national policies on ageing that incorporate the human rights concerns of older persons.[6]

[6] For a more detailed discussion of the human rights of older persons, see A/65/157.

39. On the legislative front, there have been several efforts to bolster the human rights of older persons, including through constitutional provisions. For example, in 2010 Kenya adopted a new Constitution, which contains provisions on the responsibilities of all Government and public officials in addressing issues relating to the older population. The Constitution also contains a special section on the rights of older persons. The new Constitutions of the Dominican Republic (2010), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009) and Ecuador (2008) all contain clauses against age discrimination. The Ecuadorian Constitution also includes extensive coverage and recognition of the human rights of older persons, giving them the right to gain access to specialized care; the right to preferential and humanitarian assistance in case of arbitrary displacement; the right to benefit from special protective measures and protection against elder abuse; social protection; and the right to participation and environmental protection and safety. In 2008, an amendment to the Constitution of Brazil gave older persons priority in receiving social assistance payments from the Government.

40. Other legislative initiatives address such specific issues as patient protection, financial security, gender equality in benefit qualification and gender discrimination. In 2010, the Government of the United States adopted the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which strengthens the geriatric workforce and the coordination of care in health systems, supports in-home care, prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage, expands the coverage of drugs and closes the drug coverage gap. The United States also adopted the Elder Justice Act, which addresses elder abuse through the establishment of an Elder Justice Coordinating Council, the provision of funds for the prevention, detection and reporting of elder abuse and the improvement of staffing in long-term care services. In 2009, Uganda issued its national policy for older persons, which is a rights-based document, under the theme of "Ageing with security and dignity".

41. Given the prevalence of gender discrimination, in particular against older women, countries have adopted legislation to end gender bias in programmes and practices. Gender discrimination can manifest itself in many ways, including in the workforce and in terms of access to health care and educational opportunities. The United Kingdom adopted the Equality Act 2010, which prevents age discrimination in the provision of public services and health care as well as requiring gender pay and employment equality publishing. Likewise, in 2010 Kazakhstan enacted a law on equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, which prohibits all forms of discrimination based on gender and is intended to strengthen the implementation of international commitments to advancing gender equality. In South Africa, the Social Assistance Amendment Act of 2008 equalized the age of receipt at 60 for older men and women who qualify for the older persons grant, which is a non-contributory pension given to poor older persons. The age of qualification had been 63 for men and 60 for women.

III. Highlighting key issues related to ageing

42. Although there are many facets to ageing, elder abuse and caregiving are two issues that cut across all levels of development and have an impact at all levels of society. They are also cross-cutting in nature in that they encompass aspects of capacity-building, awareness-raising and empowerment and participation. Elder abuse and neglect have slowly been gaining attention among policymakers,

researchers and law enforcement officials. In response, Member States have strengthened laws and developed initiatives to increase awareness about elder abuse and neglect among the general population, including older persons. Similarly, a greater focus is being placed on caregiving, in terms of both the growing demand for such services as the population ages and the contributions that carers, in particular unpaid family members, make to social and economic development. In addition to the training provided to formal and informal caregivers mentioned above, Member States have also developed policies to address the concerns of caregivers, including the provision of respite care, counselling and pension credits for caregivers.

A. Neglect, abuse and violence

43. Elder abuse cuts across all social, economic and national borders, with most victims of elder abuse being women, while most perpetrators of abuse are family members, including spouses, adult children, siblings and grandchildren. A recent study conducted in Spain indicated that older women are more likely to be victims of emotional, financial or sexual abuse, while older men are more likely to be abandoned or neglected.[7] Since it is often difficult to ascertain whether an older person is being abused, doctors, nurses, social workers and other health-care professionals are the first line of defence in detecting and preventing elder abuse. Yet health-care professionals have difficulty in doing so, because no standard global measure or guidelines for elder abuse detection currently exist. Measures used to detect elder abuse have to be relevant to the culture and language of the older person.

44. Raising awareness about elder abuse by civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities has led Governments to strengthen and clarify legislation, build up their human-resource capacity and find funding to protect older persons against abuse. Some countries have identified neglect and abandonment by family members and institutions as a form of abuse. The programmes and policies referred to below reflect the work that Governments have done to combat elder abuse in their countries.

45. The Governments of Canada, New Zealand, Slovenia and the United States have begun new campaigns to raise awareness about elder abuse, publicizing them on the Internet and on television and in movie theatres and print advertisements. In addition, they are working with community-based organizations, national and professional organizations and their ministries to increase awareness about elder abuse. Similarly, Belize, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have all launched public campaigns intended to educate the general public about elder abuse.

46. In Brazil, the plan of action on violence against older persons (2007-2012) includes programmes for the prevention and reporting of elder abuse and for the treatment and rehabilitation of victims of such abuse. The plan of action also includes referral centres specializing in social assistance. In Costa Rica, a new programme, entitled "Constructing solidarity", will finance projects that treat and

[7] "Elder abuse in the family in Spain, 2008", available at http://www.abuel.org/docs/11_spainfamily.pdf.

rehabilitate persons who have been abused. In Peru, the national programme against domestic violence and sexual abuse of the Ministry for Women and Social Development includes policies to combat violence against older persons.

47. In Argentina, Chile, India and Mexico, laws against elder abuse have been strengthened. For example, in Argentina, a new programme added to the elder abuse law allows older persons to report cases of abuse. The new programme will direct the victim to organizations that provide psychological and legal services. In Mexico, the Government is creating a new federal agency that will specialize in helping victims of elder abuse. In Chile, the Domestic Violence Act strengthens laws that deal with domestic violence by taking into account the needs of older persons. The tougher law against elder abuse would guarantee that anyone convicted of abusing an older person, including abandonment by family, would face prison time and financial penalties, be barred from seeing the victim and be required to attend therapy sessions. Similarly, in India, the law states that adult children are to be punished if they abandon, neglect or abuse an older adult.

48. In the Dominican Republic, the Attorney General and the National Council on Older Persons have created a special unit dedicated to addressing elder abuse cases. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the National Institute for Social Services provides legal services at no cost for victims of abuse. In Honduras, the Attorney General responsible for consumer protection and older persons addresses cases of elder abuse. In El Salvador, the Government has created a monitoring system for elder abuse cases.

B. Caregiving and carers

49. Modernization, rural-urban migration and low fertility rates have changed the way in which older persons and their families interact with and care for one another. Despite those changes, the majority of older persons in developing countries continue to live with their families. Generally, older persons prefer to "age in place", cared for at home by a family member, which provides comfort. Caregiving can be a rewarding experience; it can unite generations and strengthen the family. However, caregiving can also be very stressful, especially when the older person is confined to bed, is very frail or has a mental illness such as dementia. Depending on the mental and physical condition of the older person, a caregiver may not have time for himself/herself or be able to work or earn sufficient income or pension credits. Research has suggested the stress experienced in caregiving can sometimes lead to elder abuse.

50. Most developed countries have implemented policies that provide for respite care for caregivers, informational seminars on caregiving, home health aids and, in some cases, a monthly stipend. For example, the Government of Australia introduced the Carer Recognition Bill 2010, which sets out a broad and comprehensive definition of a carer and provides for a pension supplement for each person to whom a carer provides care, annual payments, funding for specialist disability services, supported accommodation, in-home care and respite care, and training and skills development for carers.[8] In the United Kingdom, the Government

[8] Available at http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/uploads/Carers%20Australia/20100317_speech%20Carer%20Recognition%20Bill.pdf.

is launching the National Care Service, which is based on the principle of shared social insurance funded by universal contributions, and all persons in need of care will receive it at no cost. In Hong Kong, China, Macao, China, New Zealand and Singapore, caregivers are entitled to support services, such as counselling and respite services.

51. Some developing countries have also introduced policies to support caregivers. For example, in the Russian Federation, during the "Year of the Family" in 2008, the Government promised to increase the monthly allowance for those caring for older persons. In Thailand, volunteer caregivers take older persons to health clinics and check that regular medication is provided at home. The initiative has been launched nationwide, with funding from the Government to provide a minimum stipend for volunteers to cover fuel and other expenses. In the Dominican Republic, the Solidarity Programme provides economic support for families that care for older persons. In Argentina, the objective of the national programme of domestic caregivers is to promote independence and assist older persons to "age in place".

52. Institutionalized care is available in most Member States, but various factors, including health and safety regulations and the need for adequate care by staff, a well-trained health-care workforce and appropriate financing, pose challenges to the provision of long-term care. To address those challenges, the Government of the Republic of Korea, adopted the Long-term Care Insurance for Older Persons Act 2008. The new law provides coverage for long-term care for persons aged 65 and older. Under the system, older persons will be entitled to receive nursing care and assistance with bathing and housework. Financing for the new programme will include Government subsidies, co-payment by older persons and contributions to health insurance plans by the working population.

53. In order to supplement care for older persons, countries have created community care centres and nutrition and feeding programmes. For example, in Guatemala, community kitchens provide meals for older persons living alone in rural and urban areas. In Colombia, the Institute for Family Welfare has implemented a national meal programme for older persons. In Ecuador, the "Eat well Ecuador" programme is a new Government strategy aimed at reducing hunger among older persons by providing them with meals. Similarly, in Chile, the Ministry of Health has created a programme under which older persons are provided with meals.

54. It is important to bear in mind that older persons are not only recipients of care, but also providers of care to grandchildren or other family members, in some cases reciprocating for the care provided to them by their adult children. Older women, in particular, are often called upon to provide care when the parent of the grandchild lives in another country, is in prison or has passed away. In sub-Saharan Africa and Thailand there has been increasing recognition of the care that grandparents provide to children who have been orphaned as a result of AIDS; such care includes sharing their pension with their grandchildren to pay for school tuition and fees and providing meals and medical care. However, the care that older persons provide to grandchildren, adult children and other relatives is not fully recognized and is seldom reflected in national or regional data.

IV. International cooperation in the implementation process

55. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned examples highlighting national progress in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, in many countries where the political will exists to address population ageing and the situation of older persons, the capacity to implement policies remains a challenge. Conflicting responsibilities among ministries regarding ageing policies and funding for ageing programmes, social attitudes, lack of data and research on older persons and other health and political priorities frequently overwhelm countries so that they cannot truly implement ageing policies in their national agendas. Acknowledging the urgent need to develop sound, evidence-based policies that protect older persons, the international community has come forward to provide some assistance.

56. The Secretariat of the United Nations and the regional commissions, agencies, funds and programmes have worked with Member States to build capacity, enact policies and legislation, raise awareness, provide training, strengthen research and data collection and offer a plethora of resources and guidelines to advance the implementation of the Madrid Plan. Those entities facilitate discussions among all stakeholders, including older persons and Government representatives, aimed at developing national policies on ageing, creating stronger and enforceable national development plans, empowering older persons and raising awareness of population ageing among all members of society. Highlights of the efforts made by those entities are described below.

57. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, convened an expert group meeting on the theme "Human rights of older persons" in Geneva on 25 and 26 May 2010. One of the meeting's objectives was to document general trends in national legislation and policy approaches to the human rights of older people. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs provided support for ageing-related activities through the provision of advisory services, as well as support for national research and data-collection efforts in Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan. Furthermore, the Division organized training workshops in Armenia, Belarus, Cameroon, Malta and the Russian Federation during the reporting period. Major areas of activity included awareness-raising, needs assessments and capacity-building for evidence-based policy development.

58. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), together with Governments of the region, organized a series of conferences on the human rights of older persons. In 2008, ECLAC and the Government of Brazil organized a conference on human rights as a follow-up to the Brasilia Declaration adopted at the Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference was attended by members of civil society and international non-governmental organizations and representatives of 13 Member States. In 2009, ECLAC, the Pan American Health Organization and the Government of Argentina organized a conference on the human rights of older persons with the objective of formulating language and a text for a convention on the rights of older persons. A third conference on the human rights of older persons, organized by ECLAC, the Government of Chile and the Pan American Health Organization and supported by other organizations, was held late in 2009.

Representatives of 25 countries, including the Caribbean States, attended the conference.

59. The Economic Commission for Europe is developing a road map for mainstreaming ageing in Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, which translates internationally agreed policy frameworks on ageing into concrete policy action at the country level. In Armenia, the road map was developed through participatory consultations with all stakeholders, including Government officials, the private sector, trade unions, civil society, academia, older persons and international organizations. The strategy includes capacity-building elements, such as institutional mechanisms, research and data collection and human resource development.

60. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been instrumental in assisting Governments in building their national capacity on ageing, improving information and data collection relating to older persons and raising awareness of issues related to ageing and older persons. Specifically, UNFPA has engaged with Governments in all regions of the world to develop their national policies and legislation on ageing. In the Arab region, UNFPA has been working with Egypt, Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic to develop a national policy on ageing and provide technical assistance to assess and review the legislative framework related to older persons. In the Asian region, UNFPA is assisting China, India, Mongolia and Myanmar in the revision of laws regarding older persons, strengthening national programmes for older persons, providing technical support and drafting national plans of action on ageing. In the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA is supporting the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and Nicaragua in their efforts to prepare national policy documents on ageing. In the African region, it is assisting Senegal and Togo in integrating and providing technical and financial support towards the development of a national policy and a plan of action on ageing. In the Eastern European and Central Asian region, the Programme has been supporting the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan in their efforts to develop policies and national plans that address the challenges of an ageing population as well as improve existing legislation and policies.

61. UNFPA is actively working to improve information and data collection on older persons, including through the use of surveys to assist in policymaking on ageing issues. It has assisted the Governments of Armenia and Pakistan, as well as other Governments in the Eastern European and Central Asian region, to design and conduct national household surveys on the conditions of older persons, including their health status. Furthermore, in Lebanon UNFPA is working with the Centre for Studies on Ageing to develop policy briefs on the situation of older persons, caregivers and pension systems, with the purpose of creating a database to serve as a repository of national and regional studies on older persons. In Azerbaijan, UNFPA helped to conduct research on the socio-economic problems associated with ageing and intergenerational relations. In Colombia, El Salvador and Peru, the Programme has sponsored studies on the older population with regard to social security, pensions, caregiving networks and the economic contributions made by older persons to their households.

62. In order to assist in awareness-raising efforts, UNFPA is supporting the proliferation of publications dealing with ageing issues, encouraging advocacy efforts and organizing workshops to improve understanding of population ageing. In

Cambodia, it is working in collaboration with the Government and other groups to produce national guidelines on older persons' associations, as well as training materials. In Ukraine, the Programme has supported the establishment of a gerontological information and counselling centre at the Institute of Gerontology and provided the first translation and publication of the Madrid Plan in Ukrainian. In the Republic of Moldova and Thailand, UNFPA has conducted policy advocacy and awareness-raising on social protection schemes, including potential reforms to pension plans. In Tunisia, it supported the organization of an international workshop on population ageing and its impact on the health and social sectors, while in Malaysia, it supports the University of the Third Age programme for older persons so as to utilize the potential and experience of older persons for national development. In Chile, UNFPA supported advocacy activities regarding the inclusion of older persons through an observatory on ageing.

63. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNFPA, the Government of the United Kingdom and HelpAge International have been working with the Government of Nepal to support policies and programmes for older persons. As a result of that collaborative effort, non-governmental organizations were provided with training in how to work with older persons, activities were organized in celebration of the International Day of Older Persons, assistance was provided for the drafting of the Senior Citizens Act and a health and income generating project in rural areas was piloted.[9]

64. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is assisting local governments in Croatia and Mongolia in taking into account the needs of older persons in their local development projects. During local consultation meetings, older persons are given an opportunity to express their ideas on improving public utility services, street lighting, water and sanitation and women's education. In Palestine, UNDP has established an economic empowerment project which considers the specific needs of older persons.

65. The United Nations Children's Fund is working with the Government of Malawi to reduce extreme poverty in households by piloting a new social cash transfer programme aimed at reducing hunger and starvation. According to a 2009 report by the Fund, when the cash transfers go to households with older persons, they result in more children returning to school and a greater number of households creating small businesses as a way to generate income.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

66. When viewed from the perspective of the strategic implementation framework, it is evident that countries have made significant achievements in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing over the past two years. The examples highlighted above demonstrate advances in national capacity-building and efforts to raise awareness of issues related to ageing and the empowerment of older persons and the promotion of their rights. Nevertheless, the implementation,

[9] Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Elderly People in Nepal: what happened after MIPAA, 2002?", paper prepared for the High-level Meeting on the Regional Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, Macao, China, 9-11 October 2007, available at http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/meetings/AgeingMipaa2007/NEPAN.pdf.

enforcement and monitoring of those initiatives have not been universal. The institutional infrastructure remains inadequate in many developing countries, which are hampered by limited financial and human resource capacity and political will, insufficient research and data on older persons and limited applicability of development programmes to the older population. In developed countries, where the impact of the global financial and economic crises has been particularly severe, Governments may resort to cutting back on social services, including those that benefit older persons. Given those realities, which are compounded by the rapid acceleration in the growth of the older population throughout the world, all countries will need to invest greater efforts if they are to successfully meet their priorities in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action towards the end of its first decade in 2012.

67. With a view to advancing national priorities on ageing in line with the policy approaches identified in the strategic implementation framework, the General Assembly may wish to recommend that Member States:

(a) Identify key priority areas for the remainder of the first decade of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action, including empowering older persons and promoting their rights, raising awareness of issues related to ageing and building national capacities on ageing;

(b) Ensure that the Madrid Plan of Action forms an integral part of the development agenda by giving ageing issues prominence in national development plans;

(c) Forge stronger partnerships with civil society groups, including organizations of older persons, academia, research foundations, community-based organizations and the private sector, in an effort to help build capacity on ageing-related issues;

(d) Invest greater efforts in improving research on and analysis of the situation of older persons, including through the collection of data disaggregated by sex and age, with a view to better informing and monitoring policies on ageing.

68. The General Assembly may wish to invite the United Nations system to strengthen its capacity to support, in an efficient and coordinated manner, the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.